

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
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R 300445Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8258
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
USLO PEKING

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, AF
SUBJECT: TARAKI INSISTS THAT HIS REGIME AND ISLAM ARE NOT
INCOMPATIBLE

1. SUMMARY. IN A RECENT INTERVIEW WITH A KUWAITI JOURNALIST, NOOR MOHAMMAD TARAKI, CHAIRMAN OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND PRIME MINISTER OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN (DRA), HAS AGAIN EMPHASIZED THAT THE PRINCIPLES OF HIS REGIME ARE NOT INCOMPATIBLE WITH THOSE OF ISLAM. THE AFGHAN LEADER ALSO HIT HARD AT THE ALLEGED DISREGARD RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN OTHER MUSLIM COUNTRIES HAVE HAD FOR THE MASSES IN THOSE COUNTRIES. HE CLAIMED FURTHER THAT "THE TOILING PEOPLE" OF AFGHANISTAN SUPPORT THE APRIL 27 REVOLUTION AND WILL THEMSELVES PRESERVE ISLAM IN THIS COUNTRY. TARAKI OBVIOUSLY WAS TRYING TO DERAIL THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY POTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO THIS REGIME FROM THE RELIGIOUS QUARTER, BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER,
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IN THE LONG RUN, THE DEEPLY RELIGIOUS MAJORITY OF THE AFGHAN POPULATION WILL PEACEFULLY ACCEPT THE DICTATES OF A LEFTIST-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP WHICH MAY EVENTUALLY REVEAL ITSELF TO BE "GODLESS." TARAKI AND HIS COLLEAGUES APPEAR CONVINCED, AS THEY SHOULD BE, THAT THE TOUGHEST NUT THEY WILL HAVE TO CRACK IN CONSOLIDATING DOMESTIC POWER WILL BE THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS OF THE MASSES. END SUMMARY.

2. TARAHI'S INTERVIEW WITH KUWAITI JOURNALIST BADWA FAMI (THE TEXT OF THE MAY 23 "KABUL TIMES" TRANSCRIPT IS BEING SENT SEPTTEL ESSENTIALLY FOCUSED ON TARAHI'S PERCEPTION OF THE FUTURE OF ISLAM IN AFGHANISTAN, BUT IT ALSO CONTAINED SEVERAL EXCHANGES REGARDING WHETHER THE NEW REGIME IS MARXIST OR COMMUNIST. TARAHI'S GENERAL THESIS ON ISLAM ASSERTED THAT THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IN OTHER MUSLIM COUNTRIES HAD FALLEN UNDER THE CONTROL OF EXPLOITERS WHO, ACCORDING TO TARAHI, WOULD DO BETTER TO DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION TO FREEDOM, JUSTICE, PROGRESS, AND WELL-BEING OF THEIR TOILING PEOPLE, RATHER THAN EXPRESS CONCERN ABOUT AFFAIRS IN AFGHANISTAN. HE ADDED THAT THE AFGHAN PEOPLE, NOT THOSE WHO USE RELIGION TO GAIN ADVANTAGE, WEALTH, AND POSITION, WILL NOW CONSTITUTE THE "VANGUARD" OF ISLAM, AND WILL PRESERVE ITS TENETS. HE ADDED THAT SEVERAL YEARS HENCE, AFGHANISTAN WILL HAVE THE MOST "UNADULTERATED" ISLAM EXTANT, AND ISLAM WHICH OSTENSIBLY "WILL NEVER BE MISUSED FOR MATERIAL AND PERSONAL GAINS OF DESPOTS AND EXPLOITERS."

3. THE ISSUE OF WHETHER OR NOT THIS REGIME IS MARXIST OR COMMUNIST ALSO EMERGED, BUT TARAHI WAS EVASIVE AND OFFERED LITTLE CLARIFICATION OF POSITIONS HE HAS EXPRESSED EARLIER IN OTHER SPEECHES OR INTERVIEWS. HE REITERATED THAT ANYONE WHO SPOKE OF "NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE, FREEDOM OF THE PEOPLE, DEMOCRACY, PROGRESS, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND PROSPERITY OF THE TOILING," IS BRANDED A COMMUNIST. HE DODGED A QUERY REGARDING THE POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF "EUROCOMMUNISM" IN AFGHANISTAN, CLAIMING THAT THE REGIME DISCHARGED ITS RESPONSIBILITIES TOWARD THE "TOILING PEOPLE OF THE COUNTRY INDEPENDENTLY." IN THIS REGARD, HE CLAIMED THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAS BEEN A GOOD FRIEND OF AFGHANISTAN SINCE THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION, THAT IT WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO RECOGNIZE NOT ONLY AFGHANISTAN'S INDEPENDENCE IN 1919, BUT THE DAUD GOVERNMENT IN 1973 (AS WELL AS HIS OWN GOVERNMENT), AND THAT IT WAS THE FIRST COUNTRY TO EXTEND ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE "WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED."

4. COMMENT. TARAHI'S FOCUS ON THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES OF HIS REGIME AND THOSE OF ISLAM UNDERSCORES THE LEADERSHIP'S APPARENT AWARENESS THAT THIS ISSUE MUST BE CONFRONTED AND DEALT WITH SUCCESSFULLY IF TARAHI AND HIS COLLEAGUES WANT TO RETAIN ANY SEMBLANCE OF LEGITIMACY WITHIN THE COUNTRY. HIS REASSURING COMMENTS WERE OBVIOUSLY ADDRESSED TO THE NEAR TERM, AND PROBABLY WERE DESIGNED TO DRIVE A WEDGE BETWEEN THE DEVOUTLY MUSLIM MASSES AND THE RELIGIOUS HIERARCHY HERE. MOREOVER, TARAHI UNQUESTIONABLY WANTED TO REASSURE THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES (SUCH AS KUWAIT AND SAUDI ARABIA) THAT UNBELIEVERS HAVE NOT, IN FACT, SEIZED THE REINS OF POWER IN KABUL.

5. IN THE LONGER TERM, HOWEVER, THE REGIME'S INTENTIONS ARE MUCH LESS CLEAR, AND WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT COMPLETELY THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE NEW RULERS OF THIS COUNTRY ENVISAGE SOME SORT OF SYSTEM NOT WHOLLY UNLIKE THAT WHICH PREVAILS IN PREVIOUSLY DEVOUTLY ISLAMIC REGIONS NORTH OF THE AMU DARYA. MANY PERSONS IN THIS COUNTRY -- OR THEIR FATHERS OR GRANDFATHERS-- FLED THE ADVENT OF THE NEW ORDER IN CENTRAL ASIA IN THE EARLY TWENTIES. CONCEIVABLY, LONG MEMORIES OF WHAT HAPPENED THERE AND DEEPLY ROOTED LOCAL DEVOTION TO ISLAM WILL PRESENT THE NSW AFGHAN LEADERS WITH FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES IN THE YEARS TO COME.
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